

# NEWS

## *Giant T-Rex Terrorizes Montana FSA*

**S**he was huge, almost 50 feet long. She weighed nearly 16,000 pounds. She had teeth the size of bananas — big bananas — with serrated edges like hacksaws. She had possibly the worst case of bad breath the world has ever known. She was the meanest, baddest, most dangerous animal on the planet, and she'd look upon you the same way you'd regard a vienna sausage on the end of a toothpick.

She also died at least 65 million years ago. So why has a dinosaur been causing problems for FSA employees in Montana and Washington, D.C.?

The story begins in August 1997, in Montana's McCone County, where a paleontologist (the word means "one who studies old bones") named Keith Rigby was called out to an isolated ranch to look at some fossils still in the ground. What he found was electrifying: part of the pelvis of what he thought might be the largest skeleton of a Tyrannosaurus Rex ever found, and other dinosaur fossils nearby. Rigby, a University of Notre Dame professor whose previous experience was with much smaller animals, began to excavate the priceless find with a team of volunteers. He hoped to wind up with a full skeleton that could be displayed in a Montana museum.

But one thing gave him pause a few weeks into the dig, when he asked the people who led him to the fossil exactly who owned the land on which he was digging. Their evasiveness and odd behavior led him to conduct a title search. It revealed the land belonged not to the people who claimed to own

it, but to FSA as an inventory property. That's when the fun really began.

On September 5, Rigby contacted Mel Yost, an Agricultural Credit Specialist at the Montana State Office, and asked for permission to continue his excavation. But the former owners of the property, who had shown the fossil to Rigby in the first place, had other ideas. Once they figured out that Rigby wasn't going to pay them for the privilege of unearthing the fossil, they took matters into their own hands.

They found an amateur paleontologist named Nate Murphy, who came out a week later and began working on the dinosaur himself. But, after only a day and a half, Murphy discovered that Rigby had been working on the site before him, and smelled a rat. He left, and the former owners took a backhoe and started digging out the ancient creature all by themselves.

They had a powerful motive for doing so. Dinosaur bones, especially complete skeletons, can bring in big bucks. Only a few weeks later, Sue, the most complete and largest skeleton of a T-Rex to date, was auctioned to Chicago's Field Museum of Natural History for \$8.3 million, \$7.6 million of which went to the owner of the land on which it was found.

Fortunately, the attorney who did the title search for Rigby happened on the scene and called the FBI, who put a stop to the clumsy exhumation attempt. But great damage was already done: both sides of the dinosaur's lower jaw and a third of the left side of its skull were removed, leaving what had been a nearly complete, undamaged skull in ruins. Moreover, the poachers initially refused to reveal where the missing pieces were. It took

*See T-REX, continued on page 4*



"Paleo team" and volunteers dig up the T-Rex.

## ADMINISTRATOR'S COLUMN

### Secretary Glickman's Response to the Farm Crisis

**T**hese days it's not difficult to guess what concerns farmers. Only a few years ago, things were looking pretty good for American agriculture. We were making the transition to less-regulated commodity markets, exports were expanding, and commodity prices were at record or near-record levels. The Administration was addressing the American people's demand for leaner, more efficient government and fewer subsidies, while working to provide an effective safety net for family farmers and establishing a level playing field for American exports. And farmers and ranchers were adapting well to the demands of freer markets and the new global economy.

However, as you well know, in 1998 a number of unexpected factors radically changed the picture in a stunningly short period of time. And, as far as American agricultural policy was concerned, we found that the tools that did the job in times of prosperity weren't enough when disaster struck.

The Administration has been using every resource at its disposal to meet the crisis. We are working with Congress to try to hammer out a package that will adequately address the problems we have to deal with. On September 15, Secretary Glickman addressed the House of Representatives' Committee on Agriculture. The following are excerpts from his statement:

*The farm economy is in crisis. Agriculture is not sharing in the current prosperity enjoyed by most other sectors of our economy. Prices are down for nearly all major crops. Prices for some commodities have hit their lowest levels in more than two decades, and stock levels are building. Farmers and ranchers in some regions of the country are faced with the seemingly improbable combination of low crop yields and low prices.*

*The situation today would be worse if the Administration and Congress had not enacted nearly \$6 billion in supplemental economic and disaster payments last year. Government payments have been a crucial counter-balancing force to low prices, increasing from \$7.5 billion in 1997, to over \$12 billion last year, to a projected \$16.6 billion this year.*

*Our actions to date have only helped farmers adapt to a terrible situation, they have not changed the underlying causes of today's farm misery. Part of the blame goes to the 1996 farm bill, but certainly not all of it. Farmers have faced four consecutive years of record global grain production, weak foreign economic growth, and regional weather disasters. Large global production, the Asian and Russian economic*

*crises, and the relative strength of the dollar compared to the currencies of our competitors and customers, have all weakened U.S. exports.*

*The Agricultural Marketing Transition Act (AMTA) payments provided for in the 1996 farm bill are declining — just when farmers need the help the most. These fixed payments do not respond to low prices the way counter-cyclical payments did prior to 1996. The farm bill capped the price-support loan rates, so they could not respond to today's low market prices.*

*Certain provisions of the 1996 bill are working well, but the safety net provisions are not adequate when prices are low or disasters hit. Congress has had to enact some form of ad hoc assistance — emergency loans, livestock assistance, income support, or disaster assistance — every year since the farm bill became law. Lurching from one emergency bill to the next is not good for the taxpayers or for agriculture. Short-term fixes are more expensive than carefully planned long-term programs.*

*We need a farm policy that empowers farmers not only to survive, but to prosper. It is not too early for Congress to revisit the farm bill and enact broader changes. I am prepared to work with Congress to craft a farm policy that makes sense, one that provides the counter-cyclical income support missing from the farm bill and allows farmers to prosper in today's changing marketplace.*

*In the meantime, I support the following measures to provide emergency farm relief:*

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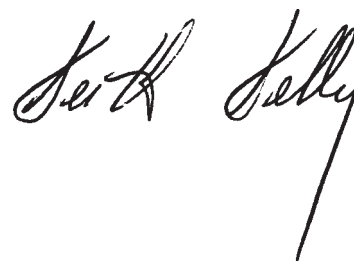
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- In the fiscal year 2000 agricultural appropriations bill, provide additional income and disaster relief for farmers, and strengthen the safety net for the longer term.
- Enact a continuation of the single-year portion of last year's Crop Loss Disaster Assistance Program, covering 1999 crop losses so farmers would be compensated if their 1999 crop losses exceed 35 percent of historic yields.
- Authorize emergency livestock assistance to help producers with high feed costs, reduced production, or mortality losses in weather-related disasters.
- Develop an income assistance program for farmers suffering from low prices on this year's crops. Pay them on actual production, not on a formula based on artificial calculations done a decade ago.
- Continue to allow producers to receive 100 percent of their AMTA payments at the beginning of the fiscal year.
- Make payments to small- and medium-sized hog operations, similar to last year's Small Hog Operation Payment I and II programs.
- Provide additional funding for farm loans, including emergency loans.
- Reinstate funding for loans to finance construction of on-farm storage facilities.
- Provide additional funds for the State Mediation Program, above the \$2 million now in the Senate bill.
- Improve the Noninsured Disaster Assistance Program by increasing coverage and replacing the area trigger with a Secretarial or Presidential disaster designation.
- Fund \$10 million requested for the 2501 program, which assists socially-disadvantaged farmers and ranchers to participate in USDA programs.
- Expand the acreage enrollment cap for the Conservation Reserve Program from 36 to 40 million acres.
- Increase export expansion activities to bring markets into balance sooner, thus hastening the farm economy recovery.
- Restore funding for the cotton "step 2" program to increase cotton sales and keep U.S. textile mills competitive with foreign mills.
- Extend the Dairy Price Support Program to balance the market and support the price of nonfat dry milk.
- Provide additional staff funding to implement this year's emergency aid, and provide funding to assure that FSA's computer systems continue to function.
- Provide additional Commodity Credit Corporation borrowing authority.

We need the help of Congress to adequately address the current farm crisis and provide a safety net to protect farmers from future disasters — both natural and economic. The steps Secretary Glickman outlined offer a credible, appropriate response to the farm crisis.

Secretary Glickman's entire testimony is available online at: <http://www.usda.gov/news/special/ctc10.htm>



## SCHOOL SUPPLIES PILE UP

Pictured are just a few of the many generous National Office FSA employees who donated school supplies for USDA's adopted school, Van Ness Elementary. The month-long August drive brought in tons of supplies, such as backpacks, pencils, binders, and glue. Grace Sheffey, USDA Drive Coordinator, says that, in all, USDA employees donated about 60 boxes of supplies.

Representing Deputy Administrators' offices (left to right) are: LD Pletcher, Farm Loan Programs; Pat Murphy, Management; Ben Myatt, Commodity Operations; Lorene Carroll, Farm Programs; and Ken Nagel, State Operations.



photo by Eric Parsons



## T-REX

*continued from first page*

a few days, but the FBI found the missing skull pieces — 300 miles away. They were in Great Falls, Mont. with some of the poachers' relatives.

All of this put Yost and the Montana State Office on the spot. They'd never imagined they might have to deal with a situation involving dinosaur bones, and they had little idea about what to do. It was obvious, however, that a few things had to be done right away. They had to get someone to guard the site to prevent the dinonappers from returning. They had to find a place to store the excavated bones so they wouldn't deteriorate and they had to get the rest of the bones out of the ground and protected. As a stopgap, the excavation site was filled in with earth to shield the bones from the elements.

It was all a little too much, so they got the National Office involved. After hiring a security firm for two weeks — the maximum they could pay for under state office authority — they asked Washington for additional funds. Meanwhile, a little research by FSA headquarter's James Fortner revealed that there are people working for USDA with experience in handling fossils on Federally-owned land, some of whom are paleontologists themselves. They work for the Forest Service, which has a number of fossil sites under its management. Although Forest Service paleontologists have no mandate to work on FSA inventory property, Fortner was able to arrange for the assistance of one working at the Nebraska National Forest, Barbara Beasley.

Fortner and Beasley worked together to develop a Paleontological Resources Use Permit, which officially allowed Dr. Rigby to excavate the site. Then, with Bob Chamberlin — the local District Director — and State Executive Director Bruce Nelson, they began to put together a "paleo team."

The team was made up of scientists from the Museum of the Rockies in Bozeman, Mont., the South Dakota School of Mines, and the Smithsonian Institution. Also helping out were members of a project to build a local museum, the Fort Peck Interpretive Center. These project members hoped to use the reconstructed Tyrannosaur skeleton as the centerpiece of their displays.

Larry Mires, President of the Interpretive Center, found an old warehouse that was secure and air-conditioned, for use as a lab to fix up and preserve the bone specimens. Many of the bones weren't in the best shape because of the rough handling they'd received. The team set to work, using fine tools to remove the plaster they had been packed in and the remaining rocks and soil from which they'd been extracted. Once the fossils were cleaned, a special coating was applied to strengthen and preserve them.

Unfortunately, all was not yet settled. There remained uncertainty about where the skeleton would end up. Would it stay in Montana, as the local citizens wished? Or would it be sent to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, as the Smithsonian, which has no T-Rex of its own, insisted was required by Federal law? Some Montanans, irate at what they suspected was an attempt to steal their T-Rex, threatened to block the roads to the site. But the issue was settled when Senators Max Baucus and Conrad Burns of Montana made statements urging the Smithsonian to allow the dinosaur to



The team works on cleaning, repairing, and preserving the dinosaur.

stay in Montana. Whether it was the persuasiveness of the Senators' arguments, or the fact that they could influence the amount of funding the Smithsonian receives, the bones were allowed to stay in Montana in the nominal custody of the Museum of the Rockies. Since that museum already has its own Tyrannosaur, it was agreed that Peck's Rex, as she had come to be known (or he — there is really no way of knowing which), would be housed at the Fort Peck Interpretive Center.

That is still not the end of the story. Much of the killer dinosaur remains in the earth, as excavation continues. The Fort Peck Interpretive Center is still not built. And there are a number of other dinosaurs buried on the same site, including four kinds of Hadrosaurs, or duck-billed dinosaurs; some Triceratops, the large rhinoceros-like herbivore featured in "Jurassic Park;" and a couple of smaller — but just as deadly — carnivorous dinosaurs. The digging will go on for years to come.



One of the dinosaur's vertebrae.



Fragment of the dinosaur's tooth.  
*photos by James Fortner*

## Cows, Pheasants, and One Smart Teen

by Marcia Bunker, CED, and Colleen Peterson, Jackson/Jones County FSA Office, S.D.

**H**eath Schnee of Jackson County, S.D., defines the word go-getter. He excels in school and, with help from an FSA loan, now profits from his own cattle and pheasant raising business.

We met Schnee last fall when he applied for and received a rural youth loan to purchase 8 bred cows. Of the cows he purchased with his loan and the one he already owned, Schnee had a 100 percent calf crop last spring. He says the calves were a good weight at branding time, and in November, when he plans to sell them, they'll weigh about 525 pounds each.

This mature, outgoing, young man is very responsible in the care of his cattle. And, with the support of his parents and FFA advisor, Brandy Knudsen, Schnee maintains his own financial and production records which he reports to FSA annually. His loan has helped him better understand finance in production agriculture. Schnee also says that his experience with FFA has helped him apply financial and farm management skills to his cattle operation.

Schnee, a high school senior, has accomplished so much in his 17 years. He's active in school as this year's elected Student Body President. He was a class representative and student council member for the last 3 years. He's also won numerous awards, such as the Drug Abuse

Resistance Education (DARE) Leadership Award, the American Award, and a silver in agricultural management at the South Dakota State FFA competition. He's been a Boy State Delegate and is active in school clubs and sports.

Schnee's latest endeavor involves raising baby pheasants. He sells them to area farmers and ranchers who release them in the fall for the pheasant hunting season. Schnee thoroughly prepared for this project, consulting with the South Dakota Department of Fish and Game and spending several weeks predator-proofing his pheasant facilities. He even developed his own system of feeding, watering, and medicating the pheasant chicks, and built a fly pen to exercise his birds.

Schnee says his experience with FSA was very positive. He especially liked the attractive interest rates as it freed up money to use toward his pheasant project. But Schnee isn't stopping here. After graduation, he plans to pursue an education in carpentry. This exceptional but modest young man gives us renewed hope in the future of South Dakota youth to carry on our state's great tradition of agriculture.



Heath Schnee and his pheasants.



Marcia Bunker gets a lesson in pheasant feeding from Schnee.

photos by Colleen Peterson

## Where Does the Color Come From?



photo by Tade Sullivan

Fall trees bordering a cranberry bog in Maine. The owner uses FSA loans to support his farming operation.

**T**he secret to why leaves change color is in the chemical composition of each tree's sap.

The amount of iron, magnesium, phosphorous, or sodium in the tree, and the acidity of the chemicals in the leaves, determine whether the tree turns amber, gold, red, orange, purple, or just fades from green to brown. For example, scarlet oaks, red maples, and sumacs have a slightly acidic sap which causes their leaves to turn bright red. On the other hand, the leaves of some varieties of ash growing in areas where limestone (alkaline) is present, will turn purplish-blue.

What triggers the change? Popular myth credits Jack Frost with orchestrating the color transformation, but in reality, the thermometer has little to do with it. The answer lies in the shifting rhythm of day and night. As the days grow shorter and the nights longer, a chemical clock inside the trees starts up, releasing a hormone which restricts the flow of sap to each leaf. As autumn progresses, the sap flow slows and chlorophyll, the chemical that gives leaves their green coloring in the spring and summer, disappears. The residual sap becomes more concentrated as it dries, creating the colors of fall.

— Source: "Friends and Family," an Alabama Farmers Federation publication

## Farm Bureau Honors Louisiana SED

by David Carnline, Program Specialist, Louisiana State FSA Office

In July, the Louisiana Farm Bureau presented Willie Cooper, Louisiana's SED for 27 years, with its Distinguished Service Award during the Bureau's 77<sup>th</sup> annual convention held in New Orleans.

Cooper, recognized for 42 years of service to agriculture, is one of only six recipients to ever receive the award, which honors outstanding contributions and service to Louisiana agriculture. A native of Pine, La., Cooper has been SED since 1972 — the longest term of any SED in the U.S. He has served under six presidential administrations. "People ask me why I've been here so long, and I tell them I really don't know," Cooper laughed. "State directors don't usually hang around this long. I guess I've been lucky, and I've enjoyed it." Prior to this position,

he held various positions in the Louisiana State Office in Alexandria.

Upon presentation of the award to Cooper, Farm Bureau President Ronnie Anderson said, "Cooper's lifetime of service to FSA has been an integral part of the success of many Louisiana farmers. His knowledge of farming and Federal farm programs has put Louisiana at the top of the list when it comes to disaster assistance, signup programs, and the like." Bob Odom, Commissioner of Agriculture and Forestry for Louisiana, said, "You have to look no further than the recent disaster assistance stemming from the 1998 drought to know what Cooper has meant to the Louisiana farmer — our state got top dollar. He makes things happen for Louisiana's agriculture community."

Bill Richardson, Chancellor of the Louisiana State University's (LSU) Agricultural Center, praised Cooper's vast knowledge of farming and farm policy. "LSU and FSA have always worked closely to do whatever we could for the state's farmers, and I am convinced that much of what we in agriculture have been able to accomplish was because of Cooper's leadership and cooperative approach to solving problems," he said.

Cooper's career in agriculture began in 1957 in the cotton fields of southeast Louisiana, where he began measuring cotton for FSA in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. "A lot of those were very long, hot days. Ever since then, I've been with FSA because I get a chance to help farmers on a grassroots level," said Cooper.



Willie Cooper and his wife, Jeannette, along with Ronnie Anderson, President of the Louisiana Farm Bureau. The painting, presented to Willie Cooper by the Bureau, is an original of his boyhood home.

### PUMPKIN FACTS:

- The annual per capita consumption of pumpkins in the U.S. is 4½ pounds. (USDA)
- As part of its Halloween celebration, Hypoluxo, Fla. holds an underwater pumpkin carving contest. Buddy teams scuba-dive underwater and carve out pregutted pumpkins for prizes. Proceeds benefit the Divers Alert Network, a nonprofit diving safety organization.
- The world's largest pumpkin weighed 1,092 pounds and was grown in 1998 by Gary Burke of Ontario, Canada.
- *I would rather sit on a pumpkin and have a seat to myself than be crowded on a velvet cushion.* — Henry David Thoreau



## Commodity Contracting — At Work for Persons with Disabilities

by Lisa Brown, Commodity Operations

**F**SA Commodity Operations' employees have long taken pride knowing that donated U.S. foods, purchased through the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC), have significantly contributed to the ongoing battle against national and world hunger. But did you know that these Commodity Operations activities provide employment opportunities for the blind and severely disabled? Many persons with disabilities work for contractors who supply food commodities for USDA purchases.

One such contractor is The Advocacy and Resources Corporation (The ARC) in Cookeville, Tenn. The ARC is the first nonprofit company in the country to be a USDA-approved commodities supplier. The ARC, a financially self-sustaining business, employs persons with severe disabilities who need more support services to maintain employment than local industries can normally provide.

USDA purchases the company's Granny Bunt's bakery mix for the National School Lunch Program and

other food aid programs administered by USDA's Food and Nutrition Service. Since 1991, The ARC has produced over 800 truckloads of bakery mix for USDA domestic feeding programs, in addition to providing bakery mix to the Defense and State Departments' feeding programs. USDA also recently awarded The ARC contracts to package 250 metric tons of fortified vegetable oil to be used for overseas deliveries.

Terri McRae, Executive Director of The ARC, explains that, "Most of the 90 employees at The ARC have never received any form of public assistance, though they generally have several interrelated disabilities. It's much more beneficial for the employees here to function in the mainstream of our rural communities than to become dependent on public aid. Producing commodities for USDA helps our employees achieve their goals of independence and self-support."

To further accomplish this, McRae explains, The ARC will soon build a new manufacturing facility, with much

of the planning being done by employees. Staff will work closely with selected outside contractors to ensure that the needs of all employees, including those who are blind or have hearing or motor impairments, are completely accommodated in the manufacturing environment. McRae says that, "By capitalizing on the input from employees who face long-term disabilities that may intensify with time, we can reduce barriers caused by disabilities."

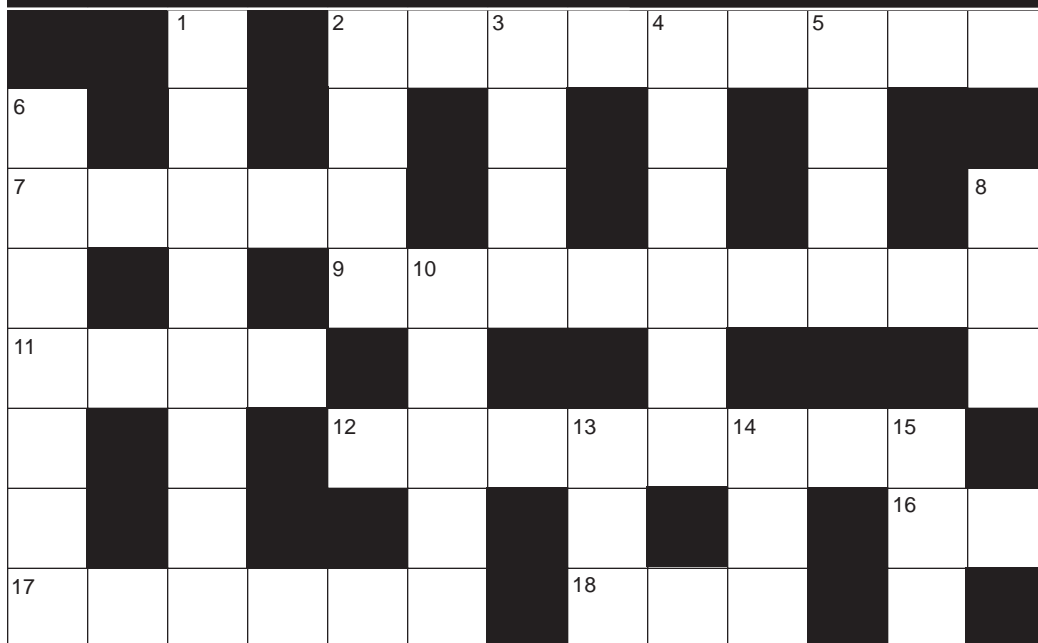
FSA's Commodity Operations, in cooperation with the National Institute for the Severely Handicapped, works under the Javits-Wagner-O'Day Act. This act advocates the employment and training of blind and/or severely disabled individuals. The act encourages the purchase of commodities and services from qualified nonprofit organizations who employ such persons.

Commodity Operations employees are proud of our partnership with The ARC and our involvement in providing meaningful employment for persons with disabilities.



The ARC employees at work.



**OCTOBER FSA CROSSWORD****ACROSS**

2. Legumes are often planted as a \_\_\_\_\_ to protect farmland when it's not in use
7. Mammary gland in a cow
9. A tree that keeps its green leaves throughout the year
11. The Bartlett is one
12. Vitamins and \_\_\_\_\_ are the building blocks of a strong, healthy body
16. Coffee \_\_\_\_\_ tea?
17. The average American eats 11.7 pounds of chocolate per year, including Kit Kat and Butterfinger, made by this company
18. Horses swish their tails to \_\_\_\_\_ themselves of flies

**DOWN**

1. Regions, in parts of the Dakotas and Nebraska, of rugged, inhospitable rock masses with little vegetation
2. Apple's center
3. Grape's home
4. USDA Forest Service worker
5. Many farmers \_\_\_\_\_ before the sun does
6. We often carve out features on this festive gourd
8. Peas \_\_\_\_\_ carrots
10. County Committees provide farmers with a \_\_\_\_\_ in FSA
13. Corn unit
14. Meat \_\_\_\_\_ potatoes
15. A section of matted roots of grass

**OUR AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS:**

- In fiscal year 1997, U.S. agricultural exports (excluding fish and forest products) totaled \$57.3 billion — and generated an estimated additional \$76 billion in business activity.
- That business activity meant an estimated 974,000 full-time jobs in fiscal year 1997 — roughly 17,000 jobs for every \$1 billion in products shipped.
- USDA economists calculate that each dollar earned from agricultural exports stimulates another \$1.32 in business activity for the economy.
- About 10 percent of the U.S. farm labor force produces agricultural goods for foreign markets.
- Farm work is just the beginning. It takes another 566,000 people in rural and urban areas to process, package, store, market, finance, and ship agricultural exports.

— Source: House Agriculture Committee

**CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS**

Date	Location	Event
Month of October		National Disability Employment Awareness Month
October 10	Middleburg, Va.	Administrator Kelly to attend 14 <sup>th</sup> Annual National Corn Growers Association Convention
October 11		Columbus Day
October 12-14	Houston, Texas	Administrator Kelly and Associate Administrator Jim Kearney to attend USDA 1890 Task Force Meeting
October 26-27	Kansas City, Mo.	Vicki Hicks, Deputy Administrator for Commodity Operations, to speak at USDA/FSA Export Food Aid Conference

*Note: The above is subject to change.*